

TRAGEDIES OF LIFE SEEN IN TREASURY'S SCRAP GOLD

By BILL PRICE.

At the Mint Bureau of the Treasury a few days ago arrived a pathetic letter from a poor widow, and inclosed in a package with it was a set of false teeth, liberally filled with gold.

The teeth had belonged to the husband, who had died leaving her nothing, although once a wealthy man. The poor woman, the words of her letter showing great grief, asked whether the Mint Bureau would pay for the gold in the teeth.

Rule Broken for Widow.

Although the rules of the bureau and the mints and assay offices under it prohibit the purchases of scrap gold valued at less than \$100, Raymond Baker, director of the United States Mint Bureau, sent the teeth to the assay office in New York with directions to forward the poor woman payment for the amount of gold found by the office.

"The human tragedies behind pieces of old gold and silver sent to the mints each year and bought by the Government run into the thousands," said the tender-hearted woman clerk, who sat musing over many of the sad stories that had come under her notice after years of work in the mint bureau.

Pathos in Every Ounce.

"See this one line in the last annual report of the director of the mint," she went on. "It shows that in the fiscal year, 1916, the Government bought 'jeweler's scrap' to the value of \$6,090,000. Well, under this heading there is included all the scrap gold bought that year from jewelers, pawn brokers, and individuals, and there was pathos back of nearly every ounce of it."

Congress gives the Mint Bureau each year a substantial bullion fund for the purchase of gold and silver. Few of the purchases are made in Washington, although thousands of visitors coming to this city each year have an idea that the Government has a mint here and turns out its gold and silver coins under the shadow of the Treasury.

The purchases are made at either of the three coinage mints or eight assay offices outside of Washington. The bulk of the purchases are of foreign coins and Alaska-mined gold, but "jeweler's scrap" is an important item. No matter in what form the gold goes to the Government, it is melted in electrolytic refineries in the assay offices and the price paid according to the bullion obtained therefrom. This bullion goes back into gold coins, into the manufacture of jewelry, and for use in the industrial arts.

"Scrap" Carries Own Stories

So there frequently come through the Mint Bureau here pieces of jewelry and silverware that carry their own stories of blasted and broken human lives; of woes and vicissitudes endless in number.

It may be the wedding ring of happy days past and gone, followed by poverty and misfortune in later years; a child's or woman's chain or locket, the latter sometimes containing a photograph of one dearly loved; a watch, the engraving upon which told of the esteem of friends or loved ones; society and fraternal emblems; gold medals awarded to heroes who have passed away and left their families in destitute circumstances; trinkets precious and numerous, now to be parted with, despite the memories that linger with them, even after the melting pot has done its work.

To these are to be added exquisitely beautiful family silverware, bearing inscriptive messages from relatives and friends of the long ago, some of it handed down from father to son and mother to daughter, now of greatest value in keeping poverty from the door or in carrying on the education of a cherished son or daughter.

And to this is the gruesomeness of the "scrap gold" coming from crematories throughout the land. For Government officials know that in the incineration of the dead there is often left in the ashes particles of gold that once adorned the teeth of a healthy, living being. Crematory attendants are watchful for these small pieces of gold, and dispose of them so that they are among the "scrap" which the Government buys and turns into bullion.

Dentists turn in many particles that cannot be used again because they are affixed to metals which cannot be melted only by the Government's melting process. In the extraction of teeth containing small gold fillings the dentists are careful enough to save the fillings, it is stated.

His Savings a "Jumble."

Not long ago the Treasurer received from a newsboy in an American town a mass of jumbled metal, melted together by a fire that had destroyed the boy's home. He had put away his savings in a small bank and the fire had done its work. He asked that the metal be redeemed.

The Government will redeem paper money three-fifths of which remains, even where enough of charred paper remains to determine what its denomination had been.

In the boy's case nothing could be done, and the metal was sent to "Ray" Baker. The experts in the mint bureau arrived at the conclusion that the mass had originally been worth about 60 cents. The law could give no relief, but Baker gladdened the little fellow's heart by sending him a crisp new \$1 bill.



CAMPBELL
PHOTO

Seven Reasons Why You Should See Mollie King in The SEVEN PEARLS

1
Mollie
King
is the
Star

2
Charles W.
Goddard
is the
Author

3
Creighton
Hale
is in the
Cast

4
It's plot is of
Startling
Originality

5
It abounds with
Thrills
and
Mystery

6
It is a
PATHE
Super
Serial

7
Produced by
Astra
wich means
Quality

TO-DAY "THE SEVEN PEARLS" WILL BE SHOWN FOR THE FIRST TIME. It has passed the acid test of exhibitors' inspection, and been pronounced the most fascinating, thrilling, absorbing serial ever screened. It is now ready for YOUR verdict. See it and be captivated. Not a single member of the family can afford to miss this marvellous production. It has everything—intrigue, adventure, mystery, thrills, suspense, daring deeds, beautiful scenery, and a wonderful love story. Start with the first episode. You will never miss one thereafter.

Read the thrilling story of the first episode in this issue of The Washington Times. See it on the screen this week and every week thereafter.

AT BEST MOTION PICTURE THEATRES STARTING TO-DAY

EXPERT
WATCH REPAIRING
Practical and Scientific Ex-
perience Combined
CORRECT TIME
Pauls'
Watch and Chronometer Makers.
1322 G. N. W.
Opposite Epiphany Church.